

Sūrah Ḥashr

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

In Sūrah Mujādalah, the previous *sūrah*, it is mentioned that those who are opposing God and His Prophet (sws) are destined to be humiliated and that dominance is destined for God and His messengers. This *sūrah* brings to light the veracity of this claim through certain incidents which took place in those times and informs the Hypocrites to seek a lesson from these incidents if they have eyes: the Almighty intilled fear in the hearts of the enemies who were regarded invincible by them; they were so terror-struck that they ruined their homes by their own hands and were compelled to lead a life in exile and none of their supporters could come to their help.

The whole *sūrah* addresses the Hypocrites. At the very end, they are also told that in order to dispel their doubts and to melt their hearts, the Almighty has revealed everything that was essential for this purpose. If this Qur'ān had been revealed on a mountain, it would have been crushed to pieces because of the fear of God. If it is not effecting their hearts, then this only means that their hearts are harder than stone, and they deserve to be treated by the Almighty in the manner He deals with such stone-hearted people.

Analysis of the Discourse

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following four sections.

Verses (1-4): A reference is made to the exile of the Jewish tribe of Banū Naḍhīr. They had been ordered to vacate their territory because they had broken their covenant and had plotted to kill the Prophet (sws). At first, they agreed to this punishment, but later on when some of their allies offered their assistance to them, they changed their minds. Ultimately, the Prophet (sws) had to launch an attack on them in the 4th year of *hijra*, after which they were forced to go to the land of Khaybar. They were given the permission to take as much as they could upon their camels. Consequently, they took away what they could and whatever remained came into the possession of the Muslims. By citing their example, the Hypocrites have been admonished to seek a lesson from this event. It is pointed out to them that they had wrongly thought that the Banū Naḍhīr could not be banished from their land, whereas, as time

proved, they had to leave their land and that too in a manner in which they had to ruin and ravage the houses they had built by their own hands; the foes of the Prophet (sws) always meet this fate; if they will seek the support of these Jews, they too shall meet a similar fate.

Verses (5-10): In a parenthetical sentence, certain objections raised by the Jews and the Hypocrites have been answered. These objections pertained to the ruining of the orchards of Banū Naḍīr by the Muslims and to the distribution of the *fay*. The attitude of contentment shown on this distribution by the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn, in sharp contrast with that of the Hypocrites, is praised.

Verses (11-17): An indication is made to another mischievous deed of the Hypocrites. After the exile of the Banū Naḍīr, they had started inducing the tribe of Banū Qurayḍah to break their covenant as well; they told them that they would also fight by their side if they were attacked and if they were exiled, they would also accompany them. It is pointed out to them that they are saying something which they can never do; neither will they offer their support nor will they accompany them. They are only doing what Satan does: after a person commits a sin on his incitement, he withdraws by proclaiming acquittal from him. The Banū Qurayḍah are warned that if they also break the covenant due to the backing of the Hypocrites, their fate will be no different from that of the Banū Naḍīr.

Verses (18-24): In this concluding section of the *sūrah*, the believers in general and the Hypocrites in particular are warned to always keep in mind the Day of Judgement. They should not become like those who had forgotten the Almighty and as a result forgot their purpose of existence and the fate they would come across; there would be a great difference between those who would dwell in Paradise and those who would abide in Hell; this difference should not be ignored by belittling it; only the dwellers of Paradise will attain real success. It should be kept in consideration that they have been revealed the truth in its ultimate form after which no excuse but stubbornness on their part could deny it. Had the Qur'ān been revealed on a mountain, it would have been shattered to pieces due to the dread and awe of Allah. If their hearts are not being influenced by its message, then it is not the fault of the Qur'ān; rather it is due to their own hardheartedness which is alienating them from this Divine Call.

In the end, a reference is made to certain attributes of the Almighty to inculcate the qualities of submission and trust in the believers who have a strong faith and to cultivate the qualities of determination and confidence in those among them who have a weak faith, while in the Hypocrites they are meant to create a fear of the Almighty. The *sūrah* finally ends on the note it began.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١) هُوَ الَّذِي أَخْرَجَ
 الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ لِأَوَّلِ الْحَشْرِ مَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا وَظَنُّوا
 أَنَّهُمْ مَانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُونُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَأَتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوا وَقَذَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ
 الرُّعْبَ يُخْرِبُونَ بُيُوتَهُمْ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَيْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ الْأَبْصَارِ (٢) وَلَوْلَا أَنْ
 كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلَاءَ لَعَذَّبَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابُ النَّارِ (٣) ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ
 شَاقُّوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٤)

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God only, and He alone is Mighty, and Wise. It was He that drove the disbelievers among the People of the Book out of their dwellings as their first fate. You never thought that they would go; and they, for their part, vainly contended that their strongholds would protect them from the grasp of God. But God's scourge fell upon them from where they did not even expect it. And He struck terror into their hearts. They were destroying their dwellings by their own hands and also by the hands of the Muslims. Learn from their example O you who have eyes. (1-2)

And had God not destined exile for them, He would have surely punished them in this world and in the Hereafter for them is the torment of Hell. This is because of their crime of setting themselves against God and His messenger. Those who set themselves against God, then God is stern in retribution. (3-4)

Explanation

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١)¹

This verse also occurs at the beginning of Sūrah Ḥadīd, I have already explained its implication in the *tafsīr* of that *sūrah*. Here, what needs to be specially give attention to is that with slight variation it occurs both at the beginning and at end of this *sūrah*. It follows from this that the facts stated in this *sūrah* substantiate the implications of this verse. In other words, this *sūrah* also substantiates its claim stated in the previous *sūrah*,

1. All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God only, and He alone is Mighty, and Wise.

and also provides the testimony of the attributes of God which is mentioned in this first verse.

This verse reminds us of the fact that every object of this universe glorifies the Almighty and by submitting to and serving Him bears witness that the Creator is devoid of any blemish or weakness; He is beyond being associated partners with and has power on all things; no one can stop Him from doing what He wants; every act of His is based on wisdom; therefore, the correct attitude for people is to resign themselves to Him and trust Him only; they should obey His directives only, fear Him only and all their hopes should be pinned on Him alone; only He can control the affairs of this world; without His permission nothing can even move from its place.

A full grasp of the above mentioned facts engenders true faith in a person which is the fountainhead of all resolve and power. And if the facts are not properly appreciated, then hypocrisy, disbelief and polytheism are provided with a path to enter the hearts as a result of which great anarchy results in every sphere of one's concepts and practices.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ لِأَوَّلِ الْحَشْرِ مَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا وَظَنُّوا أَنْهُمْ مَانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُونُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَأَتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوا وَقَذَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ يُخْرِبُونَ بُيُوتَهُمْ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَيْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ الْأَبْصَارِ (٢)

In the opinion of the exegetes, the words الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ refer to the Jews of the Banū Naḍīr who lived nearby Madīnah. In a nutshell, as per the details recorded by al-Bukhārī although they had made a peace-treaty with the Prophet (sws) however six months after the battle of Badr they started to connive with the enemies of Islam which was against the terms of the treaty, and were also guilty of unsuccessfully plotting to murder the Prophet (sws). Because of these crimes, the Prophet (sws) asked them to leave Madīnah. Initially they agreed but later ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, the famous hypocrite, incited them to refuse to go out because two thousand of his men as well as the Quraysh and the Banū Ghaṭfān are also with them. They were thus lured into this

2. It was He that drove the disbelievers among the People of the Book out of their dwellings for their first fate. You never thought that they would go; and they, for their part, vainly contended that their strongholds would protect them from the grasp of God. But God's scourge fell upon them from where they did not even expect it. And He struck terror into their hearts. They were destroying their dwellings by their own hands and also by the hands of the Muslims as well. Learn from their example O you who have eyes.

refusal by him. At last, the Prophet laid siege against them. At that time, neither did the Banū Qurayzah come to their rescue nor did the Quraysh and the Banū Ghaṭfān. They were then compelled to obey the directive of the Prophet (sws). However, they were graciously permitted by him to take along them as much as they could on their camels. Consequently, they went to Khaybar and to Azra‘āt with whatever they could take of their belongings. The belongings and assets they left behind were taken into possession by the Prophet (sws).

The words *لِأَوَّلِ الْحَشْرِ* imply that this exile of theirs was the first *hashr* they will be facing. Concealed in it is the warning that after this, they will have to face a similar *hashr*; thus in the times of ‘Umar (rta) they were exiled from these places as well, and the greatest of all *hashrs* awaits them too.

The words *مَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن يَخْرُجُوا وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ مَانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُونُهُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ* address the same hypocrites who have been mentioned in the previous *sūrahs*. They are told that they had great trust in the power and strength of the Banū Naḍīr as well as of the backing and support of their allies; they thought that no one would be able to move them from here, and they themselves were also very proud of their fortifications that no one could dare encounter them face to face; however, they should see how their pride hath a fall.

In the expression *مِّنَ اللَّهِ* the governing noun (*mudāf*) is suppressed and the actual expression is to the effect *مِّنْ بَاطِلِ اللَّهِ* or *مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ* or *مِّنْ بَطْشِ اللَّهِ*. The implication is that the fortifications and edifices built by them led them to vainly believe that not only they had become immune from human onslaughts but also from the grasp of God. This is the true portrayal of the mentality of the conceited. Those who attain power and majesty in this world think that no one can enter their forts. So much so, if a servant of God warns them of God’s clutches they are unable to understand how can God enter their strongholds to seize them.

The words *فَأَتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوا* say that these people in their estimation did not leave any way for anyone to enter their forts; however, God came upon them from where they could not even imagine.

The words *وَقَدَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ* portray the place from where God attacked them. They thought that by building walls of stones and rocks around themselves they would evade God’s grasp; however, God did not even require to dismantle these sturdy structures to come to them. He attacked them directly by striking terror in their hearts. The result was that in spite of their forts and strongholds they were so terror-struck that they rampaged the houses they constructed with their very hands. It needs to be appreciated that the real power does not reside in weapons or

in the walls of forts; it resides in the hearts and is engendered by faith in God. If a person is equipped with this power, he can fight without any weapon, and if a person is devoid of it, then the greatest quantity of atomic weapons is of no use to him and there is a strong chance that these weapons instead of becoming a means of enemy destruction become a means of their own destruction.

The words يُخْرِبُونَ بُيُوتَهُمْ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَيْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ depict how terror-struck the Banū Naḍīr were: the houses they had constructed by their very hands with great zeal and desire were being destroyed by their very hands. The word يُخْرِبُونَ portrays the situation as if it was occurring before the addresses of the *sūrah*. It has been referred to above that they had been given the permission to take along on their camels whatever they could manage. Taking advantage of this permission, they tried to pullout the logs, joints, doors and windows to take along with them. Besides greed they were also driven into this because of their enmity with the Muslims: for this reason, they would have tried to render useless whatever they left behind so that Muslims were not able to use them in any way.

They must have been assisted by the Muslims in this rampage-operation launched by them in order that they be driven out as soon as possible. This is evident from the words وَأَيْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ. Moreover, it is evident from some succeeding verses that Muslims struck down some of their trees for war needs.

The words فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ الْأَبْصَارِ urge all people who can seek a lesson to seek a lesson from this incident that how true the words of the Qur'ān were. How the enemies of God and His Prophet (sws) faced humiliation. How blatantly God's faction prevailed over Satan's faction. If even after this some people are desirous of befriending the enemies of God, they should see what fate such an attitude would meet.

وَلَوْلَا أَن كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلَاءَ لَعَذَّبَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ النَّارِ (٣)

The implication of the above verse is that the punishment of exile meted out to the Banū Naḍīr was in fact a show of lenience to them. God's wisdom entailed that no further punishment should be given to them so that if they have the ability to seek a lesson from this incident they are provided with such an opportunity. Had it not been for this, the Almighty would have sent a decisive punishment on them in this very world the way He did in the case of the 'Ād, the Thamūd and the Pharaoh etc which totally ravaged and destroyed them.

3. And had God not destined exile for them, He would have surely punished them in this world and in the Hereafter for them is the torment of Hell.

The words وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ النَّارِ imply that if this lenience could not induce them to mend their ways, then their punishment will not be confined to exile only; in the Hereafter, they will have to face the torment of Hell which will more than balance the lenience shown.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُّوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَمَنْ يُشَاقِّ اللَّهَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٤)⁴

It is the practice of God that those who rise against Him and His prophets face severe punishment.

An important point to note in this verse is that the word وَرَسُولَهُ has been suppressed after اللَّهُ وَمَنْ يُشَاقِّ اللَّهَ which indicates that showing enmity to the Prophet (sws) is tantamount to showing enmity to God, and he who rises against God may well contemplate the consequences.

Section II: Verses (5-10)

In this section, which forms a parenthetical sentence and is a digression from the main topic, certain objections regarding the Banū Naḍīr incident raised by the Jews and the Hypocrites are answered.

One of the objections raised by the Jews was that Muslims had chopped off many trees which had borne fruit. Though these trees had been cut for war purposes, the Jews tried to portray the incident as spreading anarchy in the land even though Muslims acclaim to be reformers in the land. The objective behind this objection was to cast doubts on the message of Islam in the eyes of people that his call was not that of religion; it is a mere tussle to attain political authority; the name of religion is being taken in this campaign, God forbid, only to deceive people. An answer to a similar objection raised by the People of the Book is mentioned in Sūrah Ḥadīd earlier.

The second question was raised by the Hypocrites regarding the left-behind assets and wealth of Banū Naḍīr: they demanded that like the four-fifth share reserved for the soldiers from the spoils of war, these assets and wealth left behind should also be distributed in this same ratio to the army. However, the Qur'ān regarded this wealth to be *fay* and not among spoils of war and directed that all of it be consigned to the public treasury for the poor and indigent and specially for the help of those Muhājirūn who were driven out from their homes and deprived of their assets and property merely because of their religion. In this regard, the

4. This is because of their crime of setting themselves against God and His messenger. Those who set themselves against God, then God is stern in retribution.

Anṣār and the early Muhājirūn are praised for their sacrifice and contentment that they are very generous for their immigrant brothers and give preference to their needs over their own. Only this attitude is befitting for the believers.

Text and Translation

مَا قَطَعْتُمْ مِّن لِّينَةٍ أَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوهَا قَائِمَةً عَلَىٰ أُصُولِهَا فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلِيُخْزِيَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٥)
وَمَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ مِنْهُمْ فَمَا أَوْجَفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَلَا رِكَابٍ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَلِّطُ
رُسُلَهُ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٦) مَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ
فَلِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ
الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٧) لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُونَ
فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا وَيَنْصُرُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ (٨) وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّؤُوا
الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّا
أَوْتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ وَمَن يُوقِ شَحْنَفَهُ فَإِنَّكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٩) وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا
بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٠)

The palm trees you cut down or spared was because of God's directive and so that He may humiliate the evil-doers. (5)

And whatever God returned from them to His Messenger, you spurred neither horse nor camel to capture them; it is in fact God who gives messengers authority over whom He desires. And God has power over all things. Whatever God returns from the town-dwellers to His Messenger is for God, the Messenger, the kinsfolk, the orphans, the destitute and the traveller so that it does not circulate only in the rich among you. And whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. And fear God. Indeed, God is stern in retribution. This is especially for those immigrants who were driven from their homes and their possessions while they were seeking God's pleasure and while they were helping God and His Messenger. These are, in fact, the truthful. (6-8)

And those who have already a place of residence and have firmly rooted their faith befriend those who are migrating to them and do not feel any ill-will for what is being given to them, and they give them

preference over themselves even though they are in want. And those have been protected from greed shall in fact succeed. (9)

And those who come after them pray: “Lord! Forgive us and also forgive our brothers who embraced faith before us and let not malice arise in our hearts for the believers. Lord! You are indeed very Compassionate and Merciful.” (10)

Explanation

مَا قَطَعْتُمْ مِّن لِّينَةٍ أَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوهَا قَائِمَةً عَلَىٰ أُصُولِهَا فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلِيُخْرِجَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٥)⁵

The word لِّينَةٍ refers to a fruit-laden palm tree. The verse timely answers a question raised by the Jews. When Muslims attacked the Banū Naḍīr, they chopped off some trees from their orchards keeping in view the needs and requirements of the battle. The Jews used this incident to launch a propaganda against Islam. They declared that Muslims who claim to be reformers in the land have ruined their orchards by chopping off good quality fruit-laden palm trees; how can such an act be regarded under reform; it is purely an act of spreading disorder in the land.

There was no apparent need to mention أَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوهَا قَائِمَةً since the objection pertained to striking down the trees and not leaving some of them intact. However, this mention sheds light on a particular aspect of the objection which could not have been done without its mention: when they had raised this objection, then in order to make it more effective they must have also said that if Muslims required wood for an immediate and temporary war need, they could have struck down such and such trees which not have caused much loss; however, they left intact those trees and chopped off the fruit-laden ones which shows that this act smells of revenge rather than fulfilling any essential need; by indulging into it, they wanted to cause a financial loss which is against the order and reform they claim of; it is nothing but spreading disorder in the land.

The words فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ answer the objection raised above; however, instead of being addressed to those who had raised the objection, it is addressed to the Muslims only. They are told that they should not at all pay any attention to these “well-wishers” as to which of the trees should have been cut and which not; whatever they have done was done in the presence of the Prophet (sws) and at his behest which in other words means that it was done on God’s directive, and when it was done by God’s permission, then no one knows more than Him about its wisdom and expediency and whether this is an act of reform and order or that of anarchy and disorder.

5. The palm trees you cut down or spared was because of God’s directive and so that He may humiliate the evil-doers.

The words وَلِيُخْزِيَ الْفَاسِقِينَ imply that this directive had been given to the Muslims so that the Almighty humiliates those who break promises and are traitors and they see with their own eyes that the trees they had sown with great passion and fervor are being chopped off before their very eyes while they helplessly watch them. The word فَاسِقٌ here refers to a traitor and one who breaks promises, and it is used in this meaning at many places in the Qur'ān.

The reason that those who had raised the objection are not addressed directly is because the objection was absolutely unreasonable which was raised only to vent emotions. For this reason, they were not worthy of being addressed. However, Muslims were addressed and their act was ratified so that this should inflict sorrow on the traitors and at the same time the Hypocrites are delivered a warning so that they do not make it a means of spreading evil suggestions in the society.

As far as the question that can Muslims ruin the orchards and crops of the enemy in times of war is concerned, it is not important at all. If the war requires that even their houses be razed to the ground, then they can do it what to speak of orchards and crops; however, if there is no such need, then inflicting harm on the smallest of their assets is not allowed to the Muslims.

وَمَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْهُمْ فَمَا أَوْجَفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَلَا رِكَابٍ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَلِّطُ
رُسُلَهُ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ⁶

This verse answers their second question which related to the assets and wealth left behind by the Banū Nadīr, and which was propelled by the Hypocrites because of their greed for wealth. They were of the opinion that this should also be regarded as wealth acquired from the enemy and therefore like the war booty, four-fifths of it should be distributed among the soldiers; a little earlier, precisely the same procedure had been adopted for the war booty obtained in the battle of Badr. However, the Qur'ān rejected their demand since there was a great difference in the two incidents. In the battle of Badr, soldiers had to engage in a formal war which required a use of their weapons, horses, camels whereas no such service was used in this case. The enemy assets were obtained merely because the enemy being terror-struck by the Prophet of God, vacated their area. On the basis of this difference, it was directed that this wealth obtained was of the category of *fay* which the Almighty Himself gave to

6. And whatever God returned from them to His Messenger, you spurred neither horse nor camel to capture them; it is in fact God who gives messengers authority over whom He desires. And God has power over all things.

His Prophet (sws) from His enemies. Thus all of it will belong to God and His Prophet (sws) or in other words to the Islamic state, and will be spent on the collective welfare of Islam and the Muslims.

From the words مَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ has sprung a permanent term in Islamic finance: the wealth of *fay*. It refers to the wealth obtained from the enemy without any war. The word *fay* literally means “to return” ie. the Almighty returned this wealth to its rightful owners from those who had embezzled it.

It is evident from the words فَمَا أُوجِفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَلَا رِكَابٍ that the share given to soldiers from the spoils of war was because they used their personal weapons, horses and camels in the war – so much so that they even had to arrange for their own food and other smaller provisions. Today, the situation has changed: whatever will now be obtained from the enemy will be regarded as *fay* whether it is obtained through a war or through a peace settlement.

What is stated in لَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهُ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ is stated in Sūrah Mujādalah, the previous *sūrah*, in the following words: (كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي (٥٨: ٢١) (The Almighty has ordained: “I and My messengers shall always prevail,” (58:21)). The Messenger of God does not need any help for this dominance except that of His God, and His God has power over all things. If He desires, He can have His Messenger prevail on the greatest countries of his enemies without any army. If He seeks help from the believers in this regard, then this does not mean that He is dependent on their help; one of its objectives is to grant them an opportunity to obtain His blessings and its second objective is to distinguish the sincere from the hypocrites.

مَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ فَلِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٧)

After making a distinction between the spoils of war and *fay*, this verse states the heads under which the latter can be spent. In other words, the soldiers will have no share in it. The heads which are mentioned are the same as have been mentioned in Sūrah Anfāl with regard to the spoils of

7. Whatever God returns from the town-dwellers to His Messenger is for God, the Messenger, the kinsfolk, the orphans, the destitute and the traveler so that it does not circulate only in the rich among you. And whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. And fear God. Indeed, God is stern in retribution.

war. For this reason, I will only allude to some specific issues which relate to them. Those who want to read more details, should look up the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Anfāl.

لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ (for God and His prophet): As far as God is concerned, He is not in need of any person's wealth or property. The share allocated for Him in fact returns to His servants, and an Islamic government in its capacity of its custodian and trustee spends it on the needy and on the collective welfare of the Muslims.

Similarly the share of the Prophet (sws) mentioned in it is not allocated to him because of his status of a Prophet; it is allocated to him in his capacity as the head of an Islamic state. In the capacity of a prophet, the Almighty had taken upon Himself to financially provide for Him as is specified in the Qur'ān. However, when an Islamic state came into being, the burden of running it also rested on his shoulders and in this situation it became essential that he be provided for from the national treasury. Since this right of the Prophet (sws) was in his capacity of head of state, hence after his demise it was diverted to the ruler of the Muslims. It was not of the nature of any personal possession and the question of its distribution among his heirs as his legacy should therefore never arise. The legacy of the prophets of God is religion and not that of wealth and property.

وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ (and for the relatives): This refers to those relatives of the Prophet (sws) to financially provide whom was his responsibility. This expense in fact related to his person. It was not of the category of any personal possession which should have gone to his family after his demise. Just as no one has any monopoly on Islam, in a similar way, neither did a particular family ever hold a monopoly on the public treasury nor can it ever do so. Such baseless notions were spread among the Muslims by certain miscreants who were under the influence of the Jews.

The mention of the orphans, the indigent and the travellers immediately after a mention of the Prophet's relatives sheds light on their status for it is the Almighty who has stated their rights immediately after stating those of the Prophet's relatives. The primary responsibility of an Islamic government is the financial responsibility of those who have no means in the society. Other obligations of the state come after this. If a government disregards this primary responsibility by spending the public treasury on other requirements, then even though these requirements may be important to welfare and to society, however, the government will be regarded as guilty of usurping the rights of the rightful. There is absolutely no allowance to an Islamic government to spend a single penny on luxuries and needless things. A government who indulges in such things is not an Islamic government; it is a Satanic government. It is because of such governments that the world was

inflicted by the scourge called Socialism which rendered the concept of private ownership a crime – in fact, the foundation of all crimes. In order to uproot this crime, it caused great bloodshed in the world.

The word *يَكُونُ دَوْلَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ* used in the clause means “circulation”. The expression *دالت الأيام* would mean *دار الزمان* (times changed). The word *مداولت* is from this very root and used in the Qur’ān thus: *وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ* (3:140). (We alternate these vicissitudes among mankind, (3:140)). The implication is that the share of the poor, the orphans and the resourceless has been fixed in the public treasury so that wealth does not keep circulating among the rich and is in fact provided a root to the poor.

A principle of Islamic economics which becomes evident from this is that Islam does not like that wealth just circulate in one section of a society; it wants that it should also flow to those sections of the society which are incapable of acquiring it because of their physical handicaps or a constraint in their resources. For this purpose, Islam has urged Muslims to spend as much as they can in the way of God, and has regarded this spending with their freedom of will to be the greatest means for this spiritual advancement. It has also bound a person who possesses a certain amount of wealth to give to the government a certain prescribed portion as a right of the poor.

The words *وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا* and *وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ* at the end sound a warning: whatever the Prophet (sws) gives them should be taken and whatever he stops them from should be abstained from. They must not make anything an excuse for an objection or a whispering campaign and should keep fearing God and remember that He is stern in retribution.

This warning and admonition bear evidence that the answers to the questions which have been given here had been raised by the Hypocrites, and they were not raised to investigate the issue; they were only raised by them as an objection – something which was their habit. Had these questions been raised by sincere Muslims, then there was no reason for this warning verse to come at the end.

Though the status of a messenger stated here “whatever he gives, take it and whatever he stops you from should be abstained from,” has a specific context, yet the principle which can be derived from it is absolutely general. The implication is that in every affair of life the Prophet (sws) shall be obeyed without showing any hesitancy because the status of a messenger is that of a divinely appointed guide who has to be obeyed at all costs, as is specified by the Qur’ān: *وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ* (64:4) (We send forth messengers so that men should obey

them by God's permission, (4:64)). In other words, this section of verses will have two meanings: one specific and the other general. As far as its specific meaning is concerned, it will relate to its previous verses, and as regards its general meaning, it will occupy the status of an all-embracing principle of the *sharī'ah*.

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا وَيَنْصُرُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ (٨)⁸

After a mention of the general head in which the wealth of *fay* shall be spent, mentioned here is a specific head which was the most important head keeping in view the circumstances of those times, and required equal attention of all the Muslims: helping the immigrants who at that time were abandoning their homes and coming to Madīnah from all places. It is obvious that it was the responsibility of the small state of Madīnah that was in its early stages of development to settle these immigrants once again and to financially cater for their needs. It was a requirement of these circumstances that the wealth of *fay* be given in the custody of the Islamic government so that it is provided with resources to look after these collective needs.

While describing these immigrants, it is said that they were driven out of their homes and properties, and they bore this dispossession to seek God's bounty and pleasure and to help Him and His Prophet (sws). For this reason, they are worthy of being helped by their religious fraternity with generosity and contentment of heart. The words *يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ* allude to the provision of faith and belief they had in God on the basis of which they vacated their houses and properties without even caring if they had any place to seek shelter in. The words *وَيَنْصُرُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ* refer to the great objective for which they undertook this great step: they wanted to remain alongside the Prophet (sws) so that they are always ready to lend support and help to God and His Prophet (sws).

The words *أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ* state that it is these people who are truthful in their claim to faith for they sacrificed everything they had to win the pleasure of God and to support His Prophet (sws). The implication is that these Hypocrites are not truthful who though lay claim to faith but are not ready to bear with slightest of damage in the way of God. They only want that they be provided with comfort and tasty food right in their

8. This is especially for those immigrants who were driven from their homes and their possessions while they were seeking God's pleasure and while they were helping God and His Messenger. These are the truthful.

homes. It is about these Hypocrites that it is said in verse eleven of this *sūrah*: وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (and God bears witness that these Hypocrites are absolute liars)

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّؤُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شَخَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٩)

The verse showers praise on the contentment and generosity shown by the Anṣār and the earliest Muhājirūn (immigrants): they are not feeling any bother that the immigrants are coming over to them in multitudes in order to have share in their spoils and wealth of *fay*; on the contrary, they are welcoming them with a big heart and have no feelings of envy for them on the help which is being offered to these immigrants; moreover, they do not give preference to their own selves even though they are in need too.

The expression وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّؤُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ is similar to عَلَفْتَهُ تَبْنَاءَ و ماء or قَلَدْنِي سَيْفًا و رَحْمًا or زَجَجْنَ الْحَوَاجِبَ وَالْعِيُونَا. In such expressions, a verb which is appropriate for the second object is suppressed and this suppression can be understood from intrinsic indications. Consequently, in each of the above mentioned expressions, a verb is suppressed. Similarly, in the Qur'ānic expression under discussion a verb which is appropriate for the word الْإِيمَانَ is suppressed. If a verb such as أَحْكُمُوا is considered to be suppressed, then the whole expression would be: وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّؤُوا الدَّارَ وَأَحْكُمُوا وَالْإِيمَانَ (those who already have a place of residence and have also firmly rooted their faith).

The foremost implied by these words are obviously the Anṣār because they already had houses and were also blessed with faith; however, in my opinion, also included are the earliest Muhājirūn who had already reached Madīnah and the Almighty had also created for them a satisfactory means of livelihood. The words مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ induce me to make this interpretation. The reason is that it is the status of the earliest Muhājirūn as per which they outdid the later Muhājirūn in embracing faith and in migration. As far as the Anṣār are concerned, they no doubt were ahead of others in having homes; however, it would not be correct

9. And those who have already a place of residence and have firmly rooted their faith befriend those who are migrating to them and do not feel any ill-will for what is being given to them, and they give them preference over themselves even though they are in want. And those have been protected from greed shall in fact succeed.

to say that they were ahead of all the Muhājirūn in embracing faith. What at best can be said is that they were generally ahead of the later Muhājirūn; however, if the early Muhājirūn are also included with the Anṣār then the words *وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّؤُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ* are very apt. The reason is that both of them are collectively ahead of the later ones as far as having homes and embracing faith are concerned.

The verse says that these people hold the new Muhājirūn to be very dear to them, and welcome them with a large heart. They are not bothered at all at the Muhājirūn coming to them in multitudes and as a result the wealth which was to be given to them is being given to these Muhājirūn or that these Muhājirūn will now have a share in them. On the contrary, with great contentment, they are giving preference to their needs over their own.

The purpose behind praising them is to highlight the fact that the believers should be sympathetic, generous and altruistic to each other. It is a subtle comment on the Hypocrites who had raised a demand regarding the left-over wealth and property of the Banū Naḍīr that this wealth be distributed as spoils of war. They are shown by this comparison that how a Muslim is generous for his fellow Muslim so that these Hypocrites feel ashamed.

The words *وَمَنْ يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ* give glad tidings of success to the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn and also inform us of a very dangerous spiritual ailment. The word *شُحَّ* means “greed and avarice”. By attributing it to the soul, it becomes evident that it is one of the cravings found in it; however, since the verse tells us to abstain from it, it means that it is a dangerous craving. If a person is not able to control it, it will ruin his Hereafter. This section of verses tells the Hypocrites that they are inflicted with this malady. If they did not mend their ways, they will be eternally doomed. In order to allude to this dangerous aspect, I have translated it as “selfishness”. A narrative has explained it thus:¹⁰

وإياكم والشح فإنه أهلك من كان قبلكم أمرهم بالظلم فظلموا وأمرهم بالفجور
ففجروا وأمرهم بالقطيعة فقطعوا

Abstain from selfishness. It is this which has destroyed the nations before you. It induced them to tyranny and they became tyrannical; it induced them to sin and defiance and they became defiant and sinful; it induced them to sever blood-relationships and they severed blood-relationships.

10. Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad ibn Shu‘ayb al-Nasā’ī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 1st ed., vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 1991), 486.

An important question which arises on the placement and occasion of this verse is its purpose. Our exegetes are of the opinion that just as the previous verses state that the Muhājirūn also have a share in the wealth of *fay*, in a similar manner this verse states that the Anṣār also have a share in it. However, I am unable to understand this. The Muhājirūn were mentioned because it was due to them that the government was facing a delicate situation which needed finances to take care of it. In other words, they were mentioned as the reason because of which the *fay* wealth was to be share of the government only. What was reason of mentioning the Anṣār in this regard? No one had the doubt that the Anṣār did not have any share in this wealth. When the share of all the orphans, poor and the indigent has been stated, it is obvious that the poor and the indigent belonging to the Anṣār were also included. So what was the need to specially mention the Anṣār, and that too with the attribute *وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّؤُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ* which does not refer to their need; it in fact refers them to be without any need.

In my opinion, the exegetes have been unable to grasp the occasion and placement of this verse. It has no bearing on whether the Anṣār have any share in the wealth of *fay* or not. Neither was this question found in the minds of anyone nor was there any reason for it to arise in the minds and obviously there was no need to answer it. What is actually mentioned here is that the Anṣār and the early Muhājirūn who already have homes and have also embraced faith do not regard their brothers who are migrating to them as a financial threat like these Hypocrites do; they in fact welcome them with affection, and are ready for any sacrifice that is needed from them, and it is this very attitude which the brotherhood of their faith truly entails which every Muslim should adopt.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ¹¹(١٠)

After a mention of the attitude of the Anṣār and the early Muhājirūn, mentioned in this verse is the attitude of the later Muhājirūn: they too are very sincere and affectionate to those of their brethren who embraced faith before them and also migrated before them. They are not envious of the fact that they have taken into possession all available means and resources and have also become owners of homes whilst they are

11. And those who come after them pray: "Lord! Forgive us and also forgive our brothers who embraced faith before us and let not malice arise in our hearts for the believers. Lord! You are indeed very Compassionate and Merciful."

deprived of everything. Moreover, they very sincerely pray for their brothers: “Lord! Forgive us also and also these brothers of ours who have preceded us in embracing faith and in migration. And Lord! Let not any malice arise in our hearts against our believing brothers. Lord! You are very Compassionate and Merciful.”

A subtle indication is found in the words *وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا* of the prayer expressed by these later Muhājirūn. It can be unfolded thus: “Lord! This should not happen that once we see them in comfort and ease which we do not have Satan induce in us envy and jealousy for them. Lord! On the contrary, with your grace and blessing, let our hearts be filled with love and affection for them.”

Here one should keep in mind the malady of selfishness mentioned earlier by the word *شُحٌّ*. What is implied is that in contrast these truthful and righteous people are absolutely devoid of such maladies.

Section III: Verses (7-11)

It seems that even after witnessing the fate of the Banū Naḍīr these friends of the Jews – the Hypocrites – did not learn a lesson. After that, they started to encourage and embolden the Banū Qurayzah. It was only this tribe which was left near Madīnah after Banū Naḍīr. After what happened to the Banū Naḍīr, quite naturally they must have started to fear that it was soon to be their turn next. It is possible that they had begun conspiring with their sympathizers. The Hypocrites too must have urged them to not surrender themselves to fear and must have told them that if like the Banū Naḍīr, if they too are driven out and they (the Hypocrites) will support them and will not care of anything which ensues about them from Muḥammad (sws) and his companions. And if the situation of war arises, they will go all out fighting for them. The Qur’ān assured the Muslims that these Hypocrites are absolute cowards and liars. They will neither accompany anyone in exile nor in war and even if they lend support in war they will be routed and will not be able to show their face to anyone. At the same time, the Banū Qurayzah were warned that if they were lured by these Hypocrites, they will meet the same fate as that of the Banū Naḍīr. These Hypocrites will also dissociate themselves from them like Satan by saying: *إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ* (59:16). (I here and now disown you. I fear God, Lord of the Universe (59:16)).

Text and Translation

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا وَإِنْ قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنْصُرَنَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١١) لَئِنْ أُخْرِجُوا لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَئِنْ قُوتِلُوا لَا يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ وَلَئِنْ نَصَرُوهُمْ لَيُولَنَّ الْأَدْبَارُ ثُمَّ لَا يَنْصُرُونَ (١٢) لَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ رَهْبَةً فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (١٣) لَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ جَمِيعًا إِلَّا فِي قُرَى مُحَصَّنَةٍ أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ جُدُرٍ بَأْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدٌ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتَّى ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (١٤) كَمَثَلِ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيبًا ذَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٥) كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ اكْفُرْ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦) فَكَانَ عَاقِبَتُهُمَا أَنَّهُمَا فِي النَّارِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٧)

Have you not seen those incriminated with hypocrisy. They say to their fellow-disbelievers among the People of the Book: "If you are driven out, then we shall at all cost go out with you and we will not listen to anyone regarding you, and if war is waged against you, we will certainly help you." And God bears witness that they are absolute liars. If they are driven out, they will not go out with them and if they are attacked, they will not help them. And even if they help them, they will turn their backs and leave them in the lurch. (11-12)

Their dread of you is more intense in their hearts than their fear of God. The reason is that they are devoid of understanding. They will not unite in fighting against you in a field except in fortified cities or from behind walls. Great is their enmity against one another. You regard them to be united, yet their hearts are divided. The reason is that they are not sensible. (13-14)

[Those whom they are luring] will end up with the same fate as those who recently tasted the fruit of their own deeds and a woeful punishment also awaits them. [These who are luring them] are like Satan who directs man: "Commit disbelief." Then when he commits disbelief, he says: "I here and now disown you. I fear God, Lord of the Universe." Therefore, the fate of both shall be Hell where they will remain forever. And thus shall the wrongdoers be rewarded. (15-17)

Explanation

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا وَإِنْ قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنْصُرَنَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ¹²(١١)

The address *أَلَمْ تَرَ* is meant to express wonder. The implication is: Look at these people who claim to be believers; on the one hand, they claim to profess faith and on the other hand, are extending ties of friendship with the People of the Book who have rejected the prophethood and message of Muḥammad (sws).

It is evident from the word *لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ* that the Hypocrites who have been mentioned here were the ones who had come from the Jews. For their own expedencies, they left the Jews but Judaism could not leave them. They were with the Muslims with regard to their political and economic interests only; their real sympathies were with their own brethren. Here it needs to be appreciated that most Hypocrites were originally Jews, and it is their attitude which is under discussion in the previous *sūrahs*. Very few people from among the Ishmaelites who professed faith were among the Hypocrites. Moreover, the nature of their hypocrisy was also different. In *Sūrah Mumtahnah*, the attitude of this group has been discussed.

People have found it difficult to determine the group among the Jews alluded to by the words *الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ*. However, I am fully satisfied that they refer to the Jews of Banū Qurayẓah. The reason for this is that only three big tribes lived near Madīnah: Banū Qaynuqā', Banū Naḍīr and Banū Qurayẓah. The Banū Qaynuqā' had already been exterminated. The fate of the Banū Naḍīr has been stated in this very *sūrah*. Thus the only tribe that remained was the Banū Qurayẓah which lived at a short distance from Madīnah. Thus the connivance of the Hypocrites mentioned here can only relate to them. They were destroyed right after the battle of the trench the details of which have already been mentioned in *Sūrah Aḥzāb*.

It is evident from the words *لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا* that the Hypocrites started to assure the Banū Qurayẓah that if they are also driven out like the Banū Naḍīr, then they too will go with them and that they will not accept any suggestion or

12. Have you not seen those incriminated with hypocrisy. They say to their fellow-disbelievers among the People of the Book: "If you are driven out, then we shall at all cost go out with you and we will not listen to anyone regarding you, and if war is waged against you, we will certainly help you." And God bears witness that they are absolute liars.

command of anyone in their matter and that if circumstances of war arise, they will support them. It is evident from this that the Banū Qurayzah feared that soon it would be their turn and that they did not have much faith in the promises of these Hypocrites. They knew that in the case of the Banū Naḍīr, they had done nothing practically in spite of giving their word. For this reason, the Hypocrites had to go to great lengths to assure them that they will abide by their word in their case. They even told them that in this matter they will not care for anyone. The reference was to the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims. The implication was that in order to honour their word, if they had to sever their relationship with them, they will do so.

It is evident from the words وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ that the very oath and emphasis by with which the Hypocrites had assured them of their support, with the same stress and emphasis the Almighty has called them liars. The words وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ imply an oath, as I have explained elsewhere.

لَئِنْ أُخْرِجُوا لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَئِنْ قُوتِلُوا لَا يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ وَلَئِنْ نَصَرُوهُمْ لَيُولَنَّ الْأَدْبَارَ
ثُمَّ لَا يَنْصُرُونَ (١٢)¹³

In this verse, the Qur'ān has refuted the pledge they had made: when the time comes, not in one case will they abide by their word; if the Banū Qurayzah are driven out, they will not go out with them; if they are attacked, then these Hypocrites will not support them and if they do so, they will be ravaged and show their backs. Consequently, this is what exactly happened. No one helped them when it was needed. Their exemplary fate has already been detailed out in Sūrah Aḥzāb.

Here one should keep this much in mind that like the Banū Naḍīr, they too had concluded a peace treaty with the Prophet (sws). At the time of the battle of trench, Ḥuḡy ibn Akḥṭab, the famous Hypocrite induced them to violate this treaty. He advised them that since at that time the Quraysh and the Banū Ghaṭfān are attacking the Muslims with all their might, so if they too join them in this onslaught, the Muslims would be totally exterminated. The result was that the Banū Qurayzah too were lured by him into breaking the treaty; it is known what then happened in the Battle of Trench. Right after it, the Prophet (sws) advanced towards the Banū Qurayzah and surrounded them. At that time, no one supported them. At last, they had to turn to Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh (rta) to decide their fate. The details of his verdict have been mentioned in Sūrah Aḥzāb.

13. If they are driven out, they will not go out with them and if they are attacked, they will not help them. And even if they help them, they will turn their backs and leave them in the lurch.

Through His hands, the Almighty totally routed them.

The words *لَا يُنْصَرُونَ* imply that all hopes and expectations of help will end for them. It will be a decisive blow from God, and no help can avail those who are seized by the Almighty.

لَا أَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ رَهْبَةً فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (١٣)¹⁴

Muslims are told that these Hypocrites will not dare support their brothers because these Hypocrites dread the Muslims more than God. They oppose and disobey God secretly as well as openly but they do not have the courage to rise against the Muslims.

The implication of the words *لَا يَفْقَهُونَ* is that it is indeed strange that a people be stubborn before God and yet fear the Muslims; however, when people lose their senses, then this is what generally happens: instead of fearing the attacker they fear the weapons of attack. Had they even a slight glimmer of faith and little common sense, they would have thought that when they have angered their real Master, how many more days can they save themselves from the grasp of His servants and courtiers. Here it needs to be understood that a heart is deprived of understanding obvious realities of sense and nature when, as a result of violation of obvious directives, the Almighty seals it. Thus it was regarding these Hypocrites that the Qur'an at one place has remarked: *ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا فَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ* (3:63) (this is because they first embraced faith, then renounced their faith; so their hearts were sealed; thus they became devoid of understanding, (63:3)).

لَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ جَمِيعًا إِلَّا فِي قُرَىٰ مُحَصَّنَةٍ أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ جُدُرٍ بَأْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدٌ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتَّىٰ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (١٤)¹⁵

Muslims are urged not to pay heed to any of their bullying. They do not even have the courage to come out in the open and launch an organized army attack against them. They will not even have the courage to come out and defend themselves if they are attacked, what to speak of launching aggression by coming out in the open. They will remain confined to their houses and forts and will try to defend themselves from

14. Their dread of you is more intense in their hearts than their fear of God. The reason is that they are devoid of understanding.

15. They will not unite in fighting against you in a field except in fortified cities or from behind walls. Great is their enmity against one another. You regard them to be united, yet their hearts are divided. The reason is that they are not sensible.

behind their walls and barricades. It needs to be appreciated that only a defensive war can be fought if people remain confined to their barracks and forts. No offensive can be launched in this case in any way. Moreover, even with respect to defence, this is a weak and ineffective methodology. Only when there is no option should it be adopted. One must keep in mind regarding the Jews that they have always remained very cunning in inciting the Quraysh and its allies against the Muslims; however, they have never come out to fight in the open. Whenever Muslims have attacked them, they always tried to defend themselves while remaining confined to their forts. In this regard, they always failed too and were in fact humiliated.

The words *بَأْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدٌ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتَّى* imply that how could they have the courage to fight in the open when their hearts are divided. As far as their enmity with Islam is concerned, they are indeed united and this gives the false impression that their ideologies are the same; however, the real situation is absolutely different. Except for the opposition they have in common for Islam, their hearts have great spite and malice for one another. The various tribes of the Jews also have enmity between them and their friendship with the tribes of the Quraysh and the *mushrikūn* is also a pretentious display and only confined to opposition to Islam. How can such a frail and showy unity have the guts to give a tough fight in the open to people whose hearts have been united by faith by the Almighty.

The words *ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ* refer to the real reason of their malady: they do not use their senses. In other words, instead of facing reality, assessing it seriously and facing it with determination and perseverance, they have become a slave to their desires. And when a people regards its desires instead of sense and reason to be its guide, then it is destroyed in this manner because of conflicting thoughts and ideas.

كَمَثَلِ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيبًا ذَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٥)¹⁶

This verse refers to the fate of those whom these Hypocrites were inciting. They had told these people that if they were driven out, they too would go out with them and if they attack someone, they too will support them in this attack. The verse says that if these people after being provoked by the Hypocrites take a wrong step, then they should remember that they will meet a fate no different from the one recently met by those who had done mischief.

16. [Those whom they are luring] will end up with the same fate as those who recently tasted the fruit of their own deeds and a woeful punishment also awaits them.

People have generally taken the words الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيبًا ذَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِمْ to refer to the Quraysh. In their opinion, they allude to the battle of Badr: just as the Quraysh were routed in Badr, in a similar manner, these people will be routed.

Though this allusion can be towards the Quraysh and also to the Banū Qaynuqa'; however, I have stated above that these verses mention the details of the conspiracy hatched by the Hypocrites with the Banū Qurayzah once the Banū Naḍīr had been exiled. For this reason, I am of the opinion that these words refer to the Banū Naḍīr. The foremost reason for this is that it was in fact the latest incident, as is referred to by the words . Secondly, if any example could have been very effective for the Jews, then it could have been of another group of Jews.

The words وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ signify that they will meet this fate in this world, and in the Hereafter they will have to face a grievous torment. It should remain evident here that the worldly fate of the Banū Qurayzah was much more brutal than that of the Banū Naḍīr, and in the Hereafter too, only the Almighty knows what they are going to face.

كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ اكْفُرْ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦)¹⁷

An example of the Hypocrites who had provoked the Banū Qurayzah is stated here. They had expressed that if the Banū Qurayzah were driven out, they too would go out with them, and that if the Banū Qurayzah attacked people, they would help them, and in this matter they would not be pressurized by anyone. However, the fact of the matter is that they are Satan's brothers, and will adopt the same attitude as he adopts. Just as he allures man to disobey God, and when a person commits some sin as a result, he starts rebuking him by becoming his adviser and withdraws his support. Similarly, today these Hypocrites today are encouraging and emboldening these people; however, once they take a step and its evil consequences come before them, then these "cheering" devils will turn and flee, and will never accept the responsibility of these consequences.

It is mentioned in verse forty eight of Sūrah Anfāl in the context of the battle of Badr that when the forces of the Quraysh and Muslims confronted one another, Satan while praising the Quraysh fully encouraged them: لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَإِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ (٨: ٤٨) (no one has the courage to vanquish you this day. I shall be at hand to help you,

17. [These who are luring them] are like Satan who directs man: "Commit disbelief." Then when he commits disbelief, he says: "I here and now disown you. I fear God, Lord of the Universe."

(8:48)). However, when both armies were engaged in battle, and the whole situation of the battlefield changed with the help of the angels, Satan changed his stance and remarked: *إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنْكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ* (I am not responsible of the step you have taken, for I can see what you cannot. I fear God. God is stern in punishment, (8:48)).

I have already stated in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Anfāl that the battle of Badr took place because of a conspiracy of the Jews. It is they who incited the Quraysh and planned the onslaught for them. They also assured them of their help; however, when the time came, they disowned them like Satan.

It is mentioned at numerous places in the Qur'ān that when on the Day of Judgement the sinners will try to hold their satanic leaders responsible for their crimes, the leaders will openly say that they themselves were facing bad luck like them that they were followed by them. The leaders will go on to tell their followers that they had no authority over them that they should now be held responsible for their crimes; what they did, they did themselves and should now face its consequences.

In this world also, the agents of Satan behave no differently: they allure people into sin but when the consequences come they try to save themselves from taking their responsibility.

فَكَانَ عَاقِبَتُهُمَا أَنَّهُمَا فِي النَّارِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٧)¹⁸

The implication of this verse is that once a crime has been committed, then trying to save one's own skin and blaming others for it has no benefit for either party: both end up in Hell eternally, and this is the fate of people who wrong their souls.

Section IV: Verses (18-24)

The *sūrah* ends on the succeeding verses. Though by the words used, they address common Muslims, yet the direction of address is specifically towards the Hypocrites. They are warned that the greatest issue which faces each person and needs his serious consideration is the nature and extent of his preparation for the day of accountability that is soon to come. The Almighty is fully aware of the deeds and practices of a person. He will reward each person for each of his deeds. At the same time, they are warned that they must not forget God the way the Jews did. Those who forget Him, harm Him in no way; they in fact become blind to their own good and evil. They should remember that the difference between the

18. Therefore, the fate of both shall be Hell where they will remain forever. And thus shall the wrongdoers be rewarded.

dwellers of Paradise and the dwellers of Hell shall not be small so that it may be disregarded because of lethargy and laziness; the difference, in fact will be huge. Only the dwellers of Paradise will attain success and salvation. Others will face nothing but eternal loss and failure.

The Hypocrites are also informed that as far as conclusively communicating the truth to them is concerned, it has been well and truly been accomplished and people have been left with no excuse to deny it. Had this Qur'ān which is being recited to them been revealed on a mountain, it would have been crushed to pieces because of God's fear in spite of its resilience and toughness. People whose hearts are not been affected by it should remember that the fault does not lie with the Qur'ān; it is their own hard-heartedness which is to be blamed for it. Such callous people are not influenced by anyone.

At the end, people are urged to reflect on the attributes of God. While deliberating on them, they should assess and evaluate their present and future, their good and evil, their beliefs and deeds and their fate and outcome. They should bring their inner and outer-selves in harmony with the requirements of these attributes and develop them. If they do not do so, they will make their own existence a curse for themselves.

Readers may now go on to read the coming verses.

Text and Translation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٨) وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (١٩) لَا يَسْتَوِي أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ (٢٠) لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْنَاهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢١) هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (٢٢) هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٢٣) هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢٤)

Believers! Fear God and let every soul fully evaluate what he has done for tomorrow. And fear God; Indeed, God is aware of all your deeds. And be not like those who forgot God, so God made them forget themselves. Such people are the real disobedient. (18-19)

The companions of Hell and the companions of Paradise shall not be held equal. The companions of Paradise alone shall succeed. (20)

Had We bought down this Qur'ān on a mountain, you would have seen it humble itself and break asunder for fear of God, and We mention such parables for people so that they may think. (21)

He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He knows the unseen and the seen. He is the Compassionate, the Merciful. (22)

He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He is the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Giver of Peace, the Giver of Refuge, the Guardian, the Mighty One, the All-Powerful, the Most High! Exalted be God above their idols! (23)

He is God, the Creator, the Originator, the Modeller. His are the most gracious attributes. All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to Him. And He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (24)

Explanation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِإِعْدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٨)¹⁹

Though the words used seemingly address common Muslims, however, their context and placement show that they are directed primarily at the Hypocrites whose weaknesses are under discussion from the beginning of this *sūrah*. At the end, their attention is being directed to the fundamental reality, indifference to which is the primary cause of all spiritual ailments and whose remedy is the sole remedy of all intellectual, spiritual and moral ailments. Believers should continue to assess what deeds they have done in preparation of the imminent Day of Judgement. The emphasis on fearing God is to warn people that they should not remain in the misconception that this world is a place of merriment and amusement which will suddenly end. It will not end like this; it will be followed by a day of reward and punishment which is bound to come.

The Hereafter is signified by the word “tomorrow”. The reason is to refer to its proximity and certainty so that people should not delay their self-accountability. They should not leave this to the end to contemplate because that day is not far off. Just as tomorrow follows today, this day is at hand.

In the part of the verse: *وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ* the word *وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ* is repeated in order to direct attention to the importance of the issue. After that, they are reminded that they should not remain in the misconception that God is unaware of their deeds. He is well aware of each of their words and deeds. For this reason, it is in their own benefit

19. Believers! Fear God and let every soul fully evaluate what he has done for tomorrow. And fear God; Indeed, God is aware of all your deeds.

that whatever they do they should realize that it is in God's knowledge, and one day they will be rewarded or punished for it.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (١٩)

The verse tells them that they should not become like those who forgot God so God made them forget their fate. The words *كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ* refer to the Jews. They were the guides of these Hypocrites. The Qur'an has informed them that if like the Jews they too forget God, they should remember that they will not harm God in any way; they will only ruin themselves.

The words *فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ* direct attention to a very important reality: those who forget God become indifferent to their own good and evil and to their fate. All the value, significance and majesty of life depends on understanding the reality that the Almighty has not given it to us to indulge in a few days of luxury; He has given it to us so that we spend it in obedience to Him and earn the eternal kingdom of heaven. This pinnacle can of course be achieved by someone who always keeps in mind that he has not been given life by chance; on the contrary, it is a blessing of a Gracious being and He has given it with a special purpose. If a person leads his life in accordance with this special purpose, it will be a great eternal reward for him, and if he forgets this, it will automatically become an eternal curse for him.

The words *أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ* say that these people are the real disobedient of God. When they forgot God, they forgot the nature of their life's relationship with God as a result of which they became utterly defiant to Him.

It is evident from these words the essence of remembering God: a person should always keep fresh before himself the nature of his relationship with God. This continual remembrance has a great effect on one's life. If this relationship is not kept in mind then remembering God bears little result; it becomes more of a ritual observing which or not is equal.

لَا يَسْتَوِي أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ (٢٠)

Mentioned in this verse is another very important reality keeping which in mind is essential to understand the actual value and significance of life: the difference between the dwellers of Paradise and those of Hell

20. And be not like those who forgot God, so God made them forget themselves. Such people are the real disobedient.

21. The companions of Hell and the companions of Paradise shall not be held equal. The companions of Paradise alone shall succeed.

will not be such that it should not be given importance to. Today if a person while succumbing to his base desires is not being able to feel the difference between Paradise and Hell, then he should keep in mind the fact that the difference between the two is not of some degree so that one can restrict oneself to lead the life of a dweller of Hell in some respect or the other; the difference between the two is that of eternal doom and eternal mercy. Success and salvation shall be reserved only for the dwellers of Paradise. The dwellers of Hell shall have nothing but torment and curse in store for them.

لَوْ أَنزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢١)

This verse scolds and rebukes the Hypocrites: as far as educating and reminding them and conclusively delivering the truth to them is concerned, they have been done in their ultimate form. This Qur'ān is such a thing that had it been revealed on a thing as hard and as insensitive as a mountain, it too would have submitted and shattered to pieces for fear of God; however, so hard-hearted and thus are the Hypocrites that they are not even slightly effected by it.

The Almighty says in the part *وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ* that these parables are being mentioned so that people reflect on their circumstances to see that if such a potent thing is not influencing them, then fault does not lie with it; it lies with their callous hearts. Moreover, they should also reflect that if this callousness has increased so much then God, according to His practice, might even seal their hearts the way He sealed the hearts of the Jews.

This subject is discussed in various styles at various other instances in the Qur'ān. I will cite some examples so that the real picture emerges before the eyes. In Sūrah Baqarah, it was said regarding the Jews:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٧٤:٢)

Then after this your hearts became as hard as if they were rocks or even harder; and there are some rocks from which rivulets flow and

22. Had We bought down this Qur'ān on a mountain, you would have seen it humble itself and break asunder for fear of God, and We mention such parables for people so that they may think.

there are some which break asunder and water gushes from them and others which fall down for fear of God. And God is not unaware of whatever you do. (2:74)

Similarly, in Sūrah Ḥadīd, it is said regarding these very Hypocrites who are discussed here:

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (١٦:٥٧)

Is it not time for true believers to submit with fervent hearts to God's reminder and to the truth revealed and they may not be like those who were given the scriptures before this, then a long period passed and whose hearts were hardened? And many of them were defiant. (57:16)

It is evident from certain clues referred to by my mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī that he interprets this verse under discussion in the light of the following one: إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا (We offered Our trust to the heavens, to the earth, and to the mountains, but they refused the burden and were afraid to receive it; man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he is one who wrongs his soul and is overwhelmed by emotions, (33:72)). No doubt, that one of its aspects is indeed explained by the above referred-to verse of Sūrah Aḥzāb; however, the verses of Sūrah Baqarah and Sūrah Aḥzāb quoted above explain each and every aspect of it.

The Qur'ān has regarded it as a parable. In a parable, there is no exaggeration or fantasy to be found; the objective is to see whether an abstract and symbolic thing has been depicted in a tangible and material way through comparison or not. Viewed thus, it will seem that this parable is a very fine and meaningful one.

The address in the word لِرَأْيَيْتُهُ can be general; however, if the Prophet (sws) is regarded its addressee, then there is a lot of assurance in it for him as well: if people are not being influenced by his call, then this is not fault of his; such is the nature of the Qur'ān which is being recited out to him that had it been revealed on a mountain it would have been rent asunder because of God's fear; however, their hearts have become harder than stones because they are not being influenced by it.

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (٢٢)²³

When the previous verse mentioned God's fear, this verse came up with a mention of the basic attributes of God so that the believers, the disbelievers and the hypocrites all come to know of these attributes. They should thus have an idea of how to fear Him, how much to love Him, how to pin their hopes in Him, how to put their trust in Him and how should they live and die for His cause. I have stated many times in this *tafsīr* this fact of philosophy of religion that the basis of the *sharī'ah* and religion is the attributes of God and what these attributes entail. Whatever is mentioned in the Qur'ān from the beginning to the end is a mention of manifestations of God's attributes and what they necessitate. From these attributes has emanated the philosophy of religion, and from them have the manifestations and forms of religious directives come into being. For this reason, it is essential to understand them; however, to understand them, it is essential to understand the whole Qur'ān. Here, I will just briefly allude to those aspects which are helpful in understanding the initial requirements of these attributes.

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ : first of all, the Almighty has reminded us of His divinity and also of the fact that no one except Him is God. For this reason, a person should turn to him in both hope and despair. No one except Him is worthy of being called God or being worshipped. Similarly, no one should pin his hopes in some one other than God by regarding him to be the fountainhead of granting wishes and prayers.

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ : He knows what is hidden and what is apparent. The word الْغَيْبِ (hidden) is used here with reference to people; otherwise, everything is apparent to God. Both hope and fear relate to this attribute. The aspect of despair is related to it the following manner: whatever a person does whether openly or secretly, it is in God's knowledge, and when everything is in His knowledge, He shall necessarily call man to account for each and every thing. At that time, neither will a person be able to hide any of his words or deeds nor any intercessor will wrongly intercede for him before the Almighty. The aspect of hope is related to it in the following manner: When a person's Lord is aware of all the hidden and the apparent, then he should repose all his trust in Him, and present all his pleadings before Him.

هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ : I have already elaborated upon the difference between الرَّحْمَنُ and الرَّحِيمُ in the *tafsīr* of the basmallah verse. The former alludes to the fervour and zeal found in God's mercy and the latter to its

23. He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He knows the unseen and the seen. He is the Compassionate, the Merciful.

continuity and permanence. A little deliberation shows that in these attributes too, the aspects of both hope and fear are present. The aspect of hope is very evident: when God is both الرَّحْمَنُ and الرَّحِيمُ, then there is no question of any oppression and injustice with anyone so that anyone may require an intercessor to protect oneself from these. Whatever God has done and whatever He shall do, He has done and shall do for the sake of mercy – both in this world and in the Hereafter. The aspect of fear is that when God is both الرَّحْمَنُ and الرَّحِيمُ, He will not tolerate the oppression of anyone and will necessarily avenge the oppression of all those who were guilty of it. For this very reason, at various places in the Qur’ān, He has regarded the Day of Judgement to be a manifestation of His mercy: it is this mercy which necessitates such a day come so that He does justice with each and every person: كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ لِيَجْزِيَكُمْ (God has decreed mercy for Himself: surely, He will gather you all on the Day of Judgement, (6:12)).

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيَّمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ
الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٢٣)²⁴

The verse begins with the words already mentioned in the previous verse. Evident from this repetition is that the refutation of polytheism and the affirmation of monotheism is the most important thing pointed out here. The reason obviously is that polytheism emanates from wrong concepts regarding the attributes of God. And when on these attributes all religion and *sharī‘ah* are founded, as I have referred to earlier, then it is essential that any fissure in this foundation be taken care of.

After this, eight of God’s worthy attributes are stated one after the other: there is no particle of conjugation between them. I have already explained this principle of the Arabic language at some place in this *tafsīr* that when attributes are mentioned in this way without any particle of conjugation, then it means that they are simultaneously present in the noun they qualify.

الْمَلِكُ (al-Mālik): He is the Sovereign Lord. He alone created the world and He alone is its master and ruler. It is because of this right of His that He sent His messengers so that they are able to inform people of His directives, and people while obeying them earn His pleasure.

الْقُدُّوسُ (al-Quddūs) He is devoid of any blemish, any shortcoming and

24. He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He is the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Giver of Peace, the Giver of Refuge, the Guardian, the Mighty One, the All-Powerful, the Most High! Exalted be God above their idols!

any wrong. For this reason, He has revealed His Book to purify and cleanse His servants. He sent His messengers that people can become worthy of His nearness by being cleansed. In Sūrah Jumu‘ah, both these attributes: الْمَلِكُ and الْقُدُّوسُ are referred to together with what they entail. First, God’s attributes are mentioned thus: (١:٦٢) الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ. After what these attributes entail is stated in these words: هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ (٢:٦٢) (It is He Who has sent forth among the Unlettered a Messenger of their own to recite to them His revelations and purifies them, (62:2)). A little deliberation shows that He sent His Messenger and revealed His Book because He is the sovereign Lord. An obvious requirement of He being the sovereign Lord is that He send His envoys to His subjects and also send His directives to them, and He wanted His subjects to be purified and cleansed because He Himself is pure and perfect. He does not like that His servants be incriminated with sin. Further down in the *sūrah*, the requirements of the attributes of ‘Azīz and Ḥakīm have also been stated, which shall be explained when the time comes.

السَّلَامُ (al-Ṣalām): This word means “peace, happiness and serenity”. If a person has to wish peace to someone, he uses this very word. About the night of destiny, the Qur’ān has stated: (٥:٩٧) سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ (that night is peace in entirety; it is till break of dawn, (97:5)). In other words, God is a refuge and shield for His servants against every calamity and danger. When a person resigns himself to His refuge, he becomes happy and content. It is a blessing of this attribute that remembering God is a means of peace and tranquillity for the hearts: أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ (٢٨:١٣) (surely in the remembrance of God all hearts are comforted, (13:28)).

الْمُؤْمِنُ (al-Mu‘min): This means “one of who gives refuge”. In other words, when a person seeks His refuge against Satan and his agents, He grants him His refuge. This refuge cannot be procured anywhere else and from anyone else. Satan has access to everyone except God.

الْمُهَيِّمُ (al-Muḥaymin): In the opinion of Khalīl and Abū ‘Ubaydah, this word means “guardian”. Ibn al-Anbārī is of the view that it means “protector” (*al-qā’im ‘alā al-nās*). Imām Farāhī says that it means “one who can be trusted and is one’s advocate”. In my opinion, there is not much difference between these meanings. He who is the guardian and protector is the one who can be trusted and who is one’s advocate. The Qur’ān is also al-Muḥaymin because it is a guardian over all other divine scriptures.

الْعَزِيزُ (al-‘Azīz): This attribute has been explained on several occasions in this *tafsīr*. It has the meaning of being inaccessible and beyond, and also that of being powerful and strong. In other words, none

can dominate or overpower God. He can vanquish all.

الْجَبَّارُ (al-Jabbār): This word refers to someone having might and power. This word is also used for stalks of tall palm trees. In the Qur'ān, it has also been used for the formidable people fearing whom the Israelites had pleaded thus to the Almighty: *إِنَّ فِيهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِينَ وَإِنَّا لَنَنُذِلُّهَا*: (a race of powerful people dwells in this land. And We do not have the courage to set foot in it till they are gone, (5:22)). This attribute refutes all those concepts of divinity in which all significance is given to goddesses.

الْمُتَكَبِّرُ (al-Mutakabbir): This word refers to someone who knows that he is great and superior. If this feeling is in someone other than the Almighty, then it is wrong because none except God has attained greatness and superiority on His own. All others are great and superior because God has blessed them with greatness and superiority. The feeling of superiority is worthy for God and also a reality because His superiority is His personal and is since the beginning and will remain with Him eternally. It is because of this feeling He has that He does not tolerate any partners in His kingdom and dominion. This cognizance of the Almighty is stated thus in other divine scriptures: "God your Lord is a *ghuyu*#[honourable] God; just as you would not tolerate that your wife sleep with someone else, he also does not tolerate that His servant serve someone else."²⁵ In my opinion, what the Qur'ān has denoted by the word *الْمُتَكَبِّرُ* (al-Mutakabbir) is denoted in these scriptures by the word *ghuyu*#[honourable].

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ: The implication is that what is the comparison between these attributes of majesty and perfection of the Almighty and between these imaginary deities of the Idolaters. The God Who possesses these attributes is over and above associating such partners with. If such an association is made, then His other basic attributes will stand in conflict with it, and if this is done forcibly, then a disharmony will be created in His attributes.

هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢٤)²⁶

It is God Who causes all the phases of creation of everything to take

25. I have been unable to locate this verse in the divine scriptures. (Translator)

26. He is God, the Creator, the Originator, the Modeller. His are the most gracious attributes. All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to Him. And He is the Mighty, the Wise One.

place. He makes a plan of everything, and then creates it and models and perfects it. Neither does He ask for help to complete any of these phases nor does anyone help Him out or is able to help Him in them; so how can partners be imputed to Him in this process. Each and every being passes through these three phases of creation. The first phase is that of design and plan. The Arabic word used for it is خلق. The second phase is to bring it into existence. The Arabic word used for it is برء. The third phase is to perfect it. The Arabic word used for it is تصوير. If it is God alone Who is responsible for these three phases of a thing, He alone is worthy of being glorified and worshipped by all.

The implication of the words لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى is that mentioned in this verse are some basic attributes of the Almighty. All other gracious names and attributes also belong to Him. The word أَسْمَاءُ here refers to attributes. All names of God express some or the other attribute He possesses.

The implication of the words يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ is that since it is God Who has caused all the phases of creation of a thing to take place, hence everything in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. If a person does not do so while exercising his freedom of will, then this is an act of not acknowledging the truth and arrogance on his part. The correct attitude for him is to glorify and to worship God and not associate partners with Him.

The words وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ at the end once again remind man of God's attributes with which this *sūrah* began. A person should keep in mind that God is powerful (عَزِيزٌ) and hence He can do what He wants to. Had He intended, He would have forced man to worship and glorify Him the way the rest of the universe is doing. However, He at the same time is wise (حَكِيمٌ). For this reason, He wanted to try man by giving him the freedom of will. He wanted to test whether after being granted with this status he recognizes the right of God on him or ends up a slave of Satan.

With the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah*'s *tafsīr*. فالحمد لله (so gratitude be to God on this).

Rahmānābād

3rd February, 1978 AD

23rd Šafr 1398 AH